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AUTHOR Seiferth, Berniece B.
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ABSTRACT

Teacher centers serving teachers in Great Britain differ from those in the United States. London's University Centre for Teachers (UCT) provides a range of part-time inservice activities that result in various diplomas. The Philippa Fawcett Math Centre concentrates on improving mathematics understanding and instruction. Two other centers, the Gordon Teachers' Centre and one developed by the Lothian Regional Council in Edinburgh, Scotland, are multipurpose and provide support services, resources, and professional help. (CJ)

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Berniece B. Seiferth

Professor of Education

Southern Illinois University - Carbondale

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# A BRITISH VIEW OF TEACHER CENTERS

Because of budget restraints and a somewhat blurred outlook on the purposes of teacher centers, the concept of serious inservice continued training or retraining of public school teachers has not grown perceptibly in many areas of the United States. However, it was my opportunity to make a study visit to a number of teacher centers (centres in England) in the spring of 1980 to become better acquainted with their purposes and achievements.

First, a look at the University Centre for Teachers, University of London Institute of Education is in order since it is entirely different in both purpose and achievement from other teacher centres. The UCT (originally known as the Teachers' Centre) continues to provide, as it has done since 1950, a range of part-time inservice activities for practising teachers in the London area and Home Counties, who are working in primary and secondary schools and establishments of further education. These activities may be divided as follows: I Diploma Courses, II Short Courses, III DES/Regional Courses, IV One-Day Course, V Informal Activities, VI Vacation Courses. The full range of these activities attracts well over 4,000 teachers in a full year giving an FTE of nearly 300.

In addition, the UCT also provides for the professional development of those involved in the education and training of teachers (teacher educators), such as university and college lecturers, LEA officers, inspectors and advisers, teachers' centre wardens (comparable to our principals), and others.

The Diploma Courses

The UCT provides opportunities for teachers to follow part-time courses which are both professionally relevant and academically rigorous leading to the award of the following University of London Diplomas: Diploma in Secondary

Education (2 years part-time), Diploma in Education with Special Reference to Children up to the Age of 13 Years (2 years part-time), and Diploma in the Education of Handicapped Children (1 day a week release over 3 years).

The Diploma in Secondary Education is intended for experienced secondary school teachers from all disciplines who wish to relate their particular subject interests to wider perspectives of curriculum and organization, and their practical experience to modern educational theory. It is of particular relevance to those who intend to seek or already hold posts of senior responsibility in secondary schools.

The Diploma in Education with Special Reference to Children up to the Age of 13 Years is to give a deeper understanding of the development and behavior of children before adolescence and provides an opportunity for the study of the curriculum of the primary school in the light of the principles underlying current practice and also in relation to the students' own teaching.

The Diploma in the Education of Handicapped Children is intended for teachers who are already teaching or who wish to teach handicapped children. It is concerned with the education of children with special difficulties in ordinary schools and with the education of children in schools for the handicapped except for those who are blind and deaf.

Short Courses

The UCT program of Short Courses is planned as a result of close consultation with four advisory committees which contain representatives of local education authorities, colleges of education and teachers' organizations in the light of what is currently provided by other major providers such as the DES and the ILEA. They run between 25 and 30 Short Courses in a full session for one evening a week for 6-8 weeks.

DES/Regional Courses

These courses are organized by the UCT with the aid of a grant from the DES on condition that the courses should be non-award bearing, that money not be used to pay for activities which would have been undertaken anyway and they must benefit the teachers from more than one LEA.

One-Day Courses

These sessions consist of a series of One-Day Courses on current issues in education, on the advice of its advisory committees, usually 12 per session with 50-500 in attendance.

Informal Activities

The UCT offers facilities for groups of teachers to meet informally to discuss current issues in education. These groups usually grow out of other more formal inservice activities.

Vacation Courses

These are held during the Easter and Summer Vacations each year with three held at Easter and three in the Summer Vacation. In addition, 'Education in England', which offers an overview of the English educational system, is recruited internationally.

Professional Development of Teacher Educators

These activities for university and college lecturers, LEA officers, inspectors and advisers, teachers' center wardens and others involved in the education and training of teachers follow closely the pattern of UCT One-Day Courses. There are 3 or 4 such courses each year.

II. PHILIPPA FAWCETT MATHEMATICS CENTRE

Unlike the above described centre which is connected with a university, the Philippa Fawcett Mathematics Centre is a separate centre concerned with

the inservice education and training of teachers provided by Local Education Authorities. Although the centre is located on the campus of Philippa Fawcett Teachers' College, it is separate both in function and purpose. Its purpose is two-fold; one, to aid practising teachers to develop new and better skills in teaching mathematics and second, to help teachers to move to a supervisory or administrative position in the schools. London is divided into five sections geographically, and each teacher centre for mathematics handles scores of teachers who are free to use the facilities. Materials are provided free to teachers, and they are paid for substitutes, travel expenses and meals for the times they are involved in working or taking courses at the centre.

Teachers in a school are encouraged to put together detailed teaching schemes that will be tailor-made for the children, teachers, environment and resources of the individual school. However, consultation with those outside the school is available, through mathematics centres with their vast amount of useful literature and hands-on materials.

The warden and his assistant are available to go into schools to help teachers as needed, and also teachers who have taken courses at a mathematics teacher centre are able to help. I was given examples of documents produced by a group of ILEA Mathematics Inspectors and Centre Wardens based on ideas from teachers to help individual schools to develop the Inspectorate's curriculum guidelines. They deal with experience of reflections, symmetry about a straight line or a plane surface, lines and distances, comparison and ordering, and measuring by counting non-standard units, among others. They give in detail the environmental experiences and activities, structured activity in school, materials and equipment, language, recording by children, methods of assessing mathematical

achievement and references. However, teachers are not required to follow these guidelines nor do all schools use the same text books.

Numerous courses are also available at this centre, but none are given for credit which is a change from our system. I'm not sure American teachers would be happy with that. Fortunately, the warden at this centre has taught many workshops in the United States on the teacher centres so that it gave an added pleasure to my study with him.

III GORDON TEACHERS' CENTRE

Unlike the teachers' centre described above, this centre was not for one academic subject such as mathematics, but was a multi-purpose teachers' centre for all subjects. In addition, there was an infant school housed in the same complex of buildings as well as classes for adult learners.

The Gordon is the multi-purpose teachers' centre for division six in London. The Centre runs a program of courses each term, and publicity for these activities is sent to all schools in the division. Each school has a representative to whom all literature is sent.

A poster for the staffroom noticeboard gives information about all acitivities. Courses and meetings are advertised separately for teachers. Courses are designed to meet most aspects of the teachers' inservice requirements as well as from curriculum workshops. Induction courses are held for teachers in their probationary year also.

The multi-purpose centre is staffed to provide a reference and support service to local teachers. Its library and media resources room provide a wide range of resources and professional help is available from the librarian and Media Resource Officer. At present a plan is in hand to develop a children's resource centre for teachers to use to develop their own classroom materials

and see teaching machines and their software in use. An important feature of the Gordon is its exhibition area where a changing display of curriculum ideas and publisher's materials can be seen. They even provide hot snacks after school for the teachers who use the centre for their professional development at that time.

I was asked to participate in a series of Primary Management Studies being conducted while I was there which was most enjoyable because of the give and take of the situation. The zeal of those teachers to try to become more involved with the parents of their students really impressed me because that does not seem to be an overriding concern to American teachers anymore. Also, they were to present their findings in an original way and it was amazing how much initiative they showed. They were going to use a tune from "Oliver" called 'One of the Family' which seemed most appropriate. A great deal is done at this centre also on School Journeys, which is another area which I feel that American teachers definitely would not be interested in pursuing.

IV. LOTHIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL, Edinburgh, Scotland

This teachers' centre was similar in scope to the Gordon Centre named above. The educational development in the division is sponsored under the auspices of the East Lothian Committee for Research in Education. The Committee operates through a number of groups studying specific topics. The membership of each group is open to any teacher who wishes to participate. Specialist teachers are encouraged to form sub-groups and there are at present organized groups for teachers of Art, Modern Languages, Home Economics, Early Years, Visual Aids and Technical Subjects.

The teachers' centre assists the work of curricular development by the teaching staff of the division and provides a focus for liaison between members of the teaching staff of the Division. It is also used as a centre for small exhibitions of equipment and a base for inservice training. There also is an Outdoor Centre, opened in 1970, which utilizes an old primary school and schoolhouse which have been adapted so that approximately twenty pupils and four staff members may stay there and use the area for leisure and curricular activities. It has proved to be a considerable asset to teachers in their efforts to make their teaching relevant and exciting in those areas in which outdoor experience for the pupils is desirable. The centre is of value for groups wholly interested in leisure activities and also provides a suitable base for work in biology, geography and art.

The centre contains accomodation of inservice training courses, meetings of committees, working parties, etc. Teachers may visit the centre to meet advisers, to attend courses, and to see the resources appropriate to their own work which are available from the advisers. And like the centre in London, this centre too has the facility for offering light refreshment. A sample of the courses offered were Sewing Machines, Microcumputers in Use in School, Guidance and Social Education, and Environmental Experiences for Young Children.